



Q5er – The Official Newsletter of the Skyview Radio Society

October 1, 2026

- Swap & Shop History
- Swap & Shop Pictures
- First Hamvention Visit
- Heil ProSet Repairs
- Upgraded Computers
- Free Online Classes
- New Batteries Installed
- 10 Is All I Need ?
- Skyview VE Testing
- And More . . .

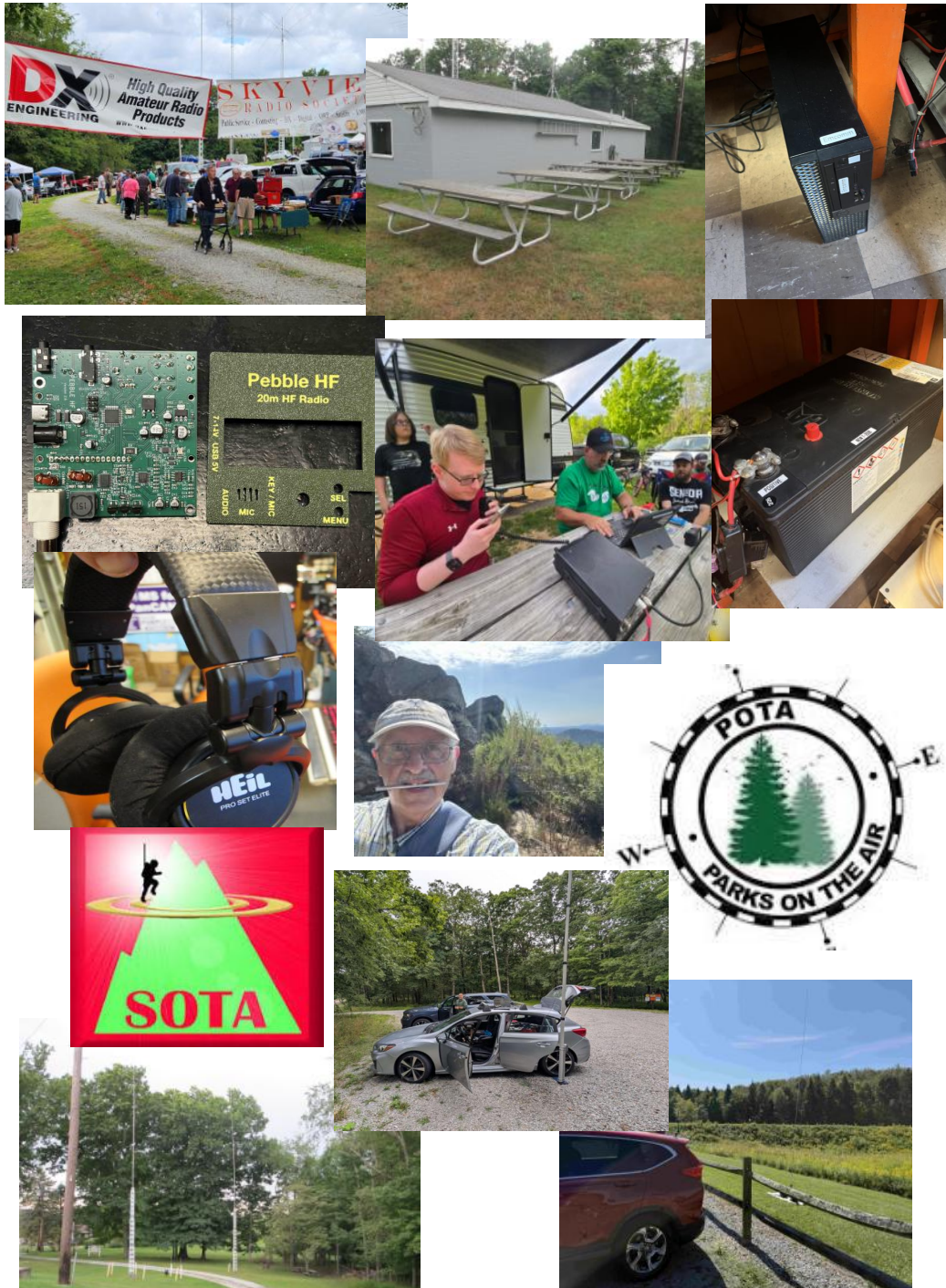
Sunspot Cycle is on the Down Side

40 Meters and 30 Meters will begin to be more useful.

20 Meters will be getting spotty .

Inside this issue:

FROM THE EDITOR	3
BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES	4
NEW OUTDOOR BENCHES	10
PEBBLE HF 20M REVIEW	12
REALLY USING MY LICENSE	19
HOW TO SOTA/POTA	22
80M PHASED ARRAY BLUES	26
A 20 POTA ACTIVATION DAY	28
NEW MEMBERS	37
KUL-LINKS	38



2026 is Skyview's 66th Anniversary !!



The Skyview Radio Society Clubhouse is the “Every Tuesday Place” . . .

Something is going on at ‘the joint’ each and every Tuesday evening, from about 1900 hours to whenever.

See the general schedule of Tuesday events on the Skyview Web Page: <http://www.skyviewradio.net>

For the latest up-to-date plan, check the K3MJW Groups.io Reflector at : <https://groups.io/g/K3MJW>

Directions are on: <http://www.skyviewradio.net>

Guests are always welcome !!

From the Editor

Enjoy this issue. Larger than usual due to all of the good contributions.

If you didn't already know that Skyview has a lot of folks who like to get outdoors and set up portable stations, this issue should show that this is a very enjoyable part of ham radio.

And as you will see from this month's articles, maintaining the vast Skyview facilities takes a lot of time and effort.

Jody - K3JZD

Remember: The number of people older than you never increases, it only decreases

Ham Radio is a Contact Sport

From the Treasurer

Very successful Swap & Shop this year. Was the mirror image of a perfect storm.

I had a lot of money to count, which was a good thing.

As always, full details are available at the clubhouse

My thanks go out to all who contributed in any way.

Jody - K3JZD

ADVENTURE: The respectful pursuit of trouble.

Skyview Radio Society is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a charitable non-profit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code. Donations to Skyview are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

As much as I hate to point it out, COVID is not 100% gone. There are still daily hospitalization admissions for the more serious COVID cases.

Sharing is not caring. If you are not feeling well, please stay home.

Don't find fault, find a remedy. – Henry Ford

Skyview Business Meeting Minutes

de Don - WA3HGW

Skyview Radio Society

Monthly Business Meeting – September 1, 2026

Call to Order: 7:30 PM by President Brian Sauk, KC3VNB

Attending – 27 members: KC3LVG, K3STL, KQ3S, WA3HGW, KC3LHW, KU3J, WA3KFS, K3JAS, N3KAC, N3WMI, AG3U, AC3KI, NJ3R, AG3I, KC3VNB, NM3A, KD3BYT, W3UY, K3JZD, KA3CBA, KE3Z, WC3O, N3DRB, N2MA, KC3CBQ, KC3OOS and prospective member KC3WHX

Meeting Minutes: The minutes of the August 4, 2026 meeting were distributed for review. A motion to accept the minutes as presented was made by NM3A and seconded by AC3KI. The motion passed without objection.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Jody, K3JZD, reviewed the 31 August 2026 Financial Report (Original and revised attached). All bills to date are paid, and fixed expenses continue to look good for the remainder of 2026. Unallocated funds in were from the Rachel Carson organization, 13 Colonies special event and the 50/50 drawing plus donation and from VE exams. Unallocated funds spent were for some Heil Pro-Set repair parts. Some T-Bills matured and the interest was applied to the building fund. Replacement T-Bills will be purchased this month. A motion to accept the Treasurer's Report was made by AB3GY and seconded by WA3KFS. The motion passed without objection.

Membership Report: Tom, AB3GY, reported four membership applications were received at the Swap & Shop. AB3GY made a motion to open the membership rolls, which was seconded by NM3A. The applications are from: Paul Barbour, KC3WHX, an Amateur Extra, Jim Mangus, WB8YST, an Amateur Extra, Susan Johnson, KD8BJW, a General and Geoff Zeiss, KC3DVP, a General. AB3GY made a motion to accept these hams as new members. The motion was seconded by AC3KI. AB3GY made a motion to close the membership, which was seconded by K3JZD. Both motions passed without objection. The membership now stands at 169.

Radio Officer Report: Bob, WC3O, reported the tree thinning has been completed and all the resulting firewood has been stacked. The new picnic benches are also complete and were in use at the Swap & Shop. One of the two towers for the 80 meter phased array has been reinstalled, with the other one ready to be set once the "stinger" on top has been reinforced. The next project to start is installation of the ring rotator. It will be placed at the south facing beam location on the repeater tower. Everything else radio related is working well.

Kitchen Report: Bob, WC3O, reported that kitchen current balance is \$147. All the food purchased for the Swap & Shop were covered by the existing kitchen fund balance.

VE Report: There was one candidate in August, a youth who passed the Technician test. There is presently one candidate scheduled for the September 19 VE session.

Newsletter: The August Q5er is now out with the usual great articles. New material is requested by September 15 for the October issue.

Building Committee: The generator was purchased and installed, including all the wiring. The next step is a dedicated propane tank to be installed by our regular propane provider. Unfortunately a date has not yet been established due to a truck driver's strike at the company. Once the propane is installed and connected, Kohler will come out to inspect the installation and perform the check out and start-up procedures. Our architect is at work preparing the drawings and specifications required for obtaining building permits for the building expansion.

Calendar of Events:

September 13 – Butler, PA hamfest. A new location this year.

September 26 & 27 – CQ WW RTTY contest. Operation at the clubhouse.

October 10 & 11 – PA QSO Party and Skyview Apple Pie bake-off.

Q5er – The Official Newsletter of the Skyview Radio Society

October 12 (approximate date) – N3DL planned operation from the Vatican City ham shack.

October 17 – Founders Day special event operating from the clubhouse.

November 2 – K2V Day of the Dead special event operating from Evans City, PA.

November 7 – Trip to DX Engineering, followed by lunch and a visit to the newly expanded K3LR Shack.

Old Business: None.

New Business: Swap & Shop main prize drawing committee report, as submitted by Marty, AG3I: The main prize drawing committee became aware of certain irregularities associated with the selection of the winning ticket in the draw for the first prize. Upon significant consideration and discussion, the specifics of the irregularity were shared with the winner of the first place prize. After consideration, the winner of the first place prize decided it would be best to return the first place prize to the club and have a redraw of the winner. The first place prize has been returned to the Skyview president and the first place prize has been re-drawn. The winner's call sign now appears in the list of all prize winners.

Weather Night: Steve, K3FAZ, was not present, so where was no report at this time. Later the subject was announced on the club reflector. The September Weather Night topic was: Numerical Weather Models Forecasting.

Elmer Night: September 22, Review and warm-up for the CQ WW RTTY contest coming up the following weekend..

Smoke and Solder: Last week's Smoke & Solder was cancelled due to the meeting room being stuffed with equipment for the Skyview sale table at the Swap & Shop. There are still several individual projects going on at the Smoke & Solder nights. Your project is welcome too!

Net Report:

August 6 KC3TTK at 52, August 13 K3STL at 45, August 20 K3WM at 51 and August 27 WC3O at 44. Average for August is 48. High check-in goes to KC3TTK. Congrats to Charles.

50/50 Drawing: Total amount collected is \$28 with the \$14 proceeds going to the kitchen fund. (I didn't write down who had the winning ticket!)

Meeting Adjourned: Brian, KC3VNB, requested a motion to adjourn. The motion was made by NM3A and seconded by AC3KI. The motion passed without objection. The meeting was adjourned at 8:19 PM.

**Respectfully Submitted,
Don Stewart, WA3HGW.**



SKYVIEW SWAP 'N SHOP 2026 REPORT

The 2026 hamfest is now in the history books. I would like to thank everyone that helped and supported the event. As you well know, it takes many hands to pull this fund raising event off.

The set-up on Saturday went very well. Many members had showed up well before the 9:00 AM. meeting time. Every thing went smoothly.

The completion of set up was done in record time. I could not have asked for any better group of hard working hams.

On Sunday morning, the weather was great for a hamfest. As I arrived at the club at 6:00 AM., there were several members already getting things in shape up. We were quickly set up for business.

Fortunately, Skyview has the most loyal hamfest followers. The paid attendance (approx. 300) and gross dollars received were above average.

I estimate the net profit to be a record breaker. Our treasurer, Jody, K3JZD, is trying to calculate an exact number, but that will have to wait until he has paid all the costs.

I had amazing 48% return on the advance admittance sale.

The lucky prizewinners were listed on the K3MJW reflector. They are also listed here.

The excellent co-operation of the membership helps make this event a pleasurable experience.

Again, I would like to thank everyone that helped make this hamfest a success.

John Italiano - WA3KFS

Skyview Hamfest

Chairman

SKYVIEW 2026 SWAP 'N SHOP PRIZE WINNERS

8:00 Door Prize - Heil T-shirt/Handbook: **KC3VNB**

8:30 Door Prize - Heil T-shirt/Handbook: **N3WH**

9:00 Door Prize - \$25 ARRL Gift Certificate: **KC3VCX**

9:30 Door Prize - \$25 ARRL Gift Certificate: **KB3VSP**

10:00 Door Prize - \$50 ARRL Gift Certificate: **KF6YYT**

50/50 Raffle—\$92.50 - **WB5LLI**

Begali Key : **K3WM**

1st Prize - Icom IC-7610 Compliments of DX Engineering and Icom

Dan Bryant
9405 Rhonda Dr
Henrico, VA 23229



2nd Prize - ARRL Handbook for Radio Communication 101st Edition: **KD3BEM**

3rd Prize: \$100 DX Engineering Gift Certificate: **KB3YWU**

4th Prize - ARRL Antenna Book for Radio Communication 25th Edition: **K3MJ**

5th Prize - \$100 DX Engineering Gift Certificate: **KD3DPW**

6th Prize - Battery Box compliments of AB3IK: **KC3WHX**

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That sinking feeling

de Cookie – WC3O

On the side of the clubhouse there were three wooden picnic benches? Anyone remember where those came from? I'll tell you at the end of the article.



Over the years I never realized that the seat boards on the benches kept getting closer and closer to the ground. I don't remember if the lumber was pressure treated or not, however the wood that was in contact with the ground kept rotting out and the benches were getting lower and lower. The remaining wood was also in poor condition.



The decision was to either rehab these benches or go fresh. After looking at the condition of the wood I thought that we would be better off going with fresh benches.

Next decision: Go all wood like the ones we were replacing or go with metal frames and wood planks. Either way would have been just fine, but I figured that the steel frame types are much easier to move around with one

person and tilt up for cutting the grass under them.

I found frame sets for sale at Northern Tool. The shipping was reasonable so we bought three kits to replace our ailing benches.

The company that makes the frames noted that they were Galvanized. I like that! However, the "term" they used was "Pre-Galvanized pipe". After I purchased the kits I got to wondering why they chose the term Pre-Galvanized.

It turns out that this means that the pipe used is Galvanized as raw pipe. It is then cut and bent into shape, rather than Galvanizing the pipe after it is cut and bent. That would be the best way.

When the packages arrived I felt that the Galvanizing looked mighty thin, in my opinion.

After some thought, I decided to coat the parts of the frame that interfaced with the ground, with ZRC zinc paint. If you've never used ZRC, it's a paint that is basically 90% zinc in thinners. I don't know what those thinners are but I think they'll kill you dead! VERY MUCH an operation for a well ventilated area.



I painted the frames at work, hanging them on an automotive lift to make life easier. I kept lots of air moving through the shop. ZRC is good stuff.

I decided to paint the frames with the same stuff that we paint the towers with up the joint, PPG Pitt-Tech DTM, Direct To Metal paint. I wiped the pieces. I tried something new that worked out great. I used a combination of a brush and a small 3 inch paint roller. The roller was great for painting all of that tubing. I think I'll use that next time I need to paint a tower. MUCH nicer than a paint mitt.



With all of the steel painted it was time to assemble. The kit included all required hardware. Don, WA3HGW bought the lumber and stained it with some really nice weather resistant sealer. It looks great.



I am hoping to recondition the best of the three wooden benches and move it down near the road under that lovely little Dogwood tree. It'll be a nice place to sit in the shade and relax. Maybe toss a wire in the trees and make a Q or two!

So that's the deal with the new picnic benches. Enjoy them in health. Many thanks to all involved.

Oh by the way...

Remember the old Hulton bridge? You'll remember there was an old converted gas station on the Harmar side that sold picnic benches. THAT's where the old benches came from.

Cooky - WC3O

Pebble HF 20m

de Dan - NM3A

Mike and Becky (N4FFF & N4BKY) are a couple from Alabama that have really gotten into POTA and QRP operating. They publish a blog telling of their adventures and they have a web site with a few cool gadgets that they have developed. They are relatively new to ham radio, and their perspective is slanted towards beginners, POTA, QRP, and CW.

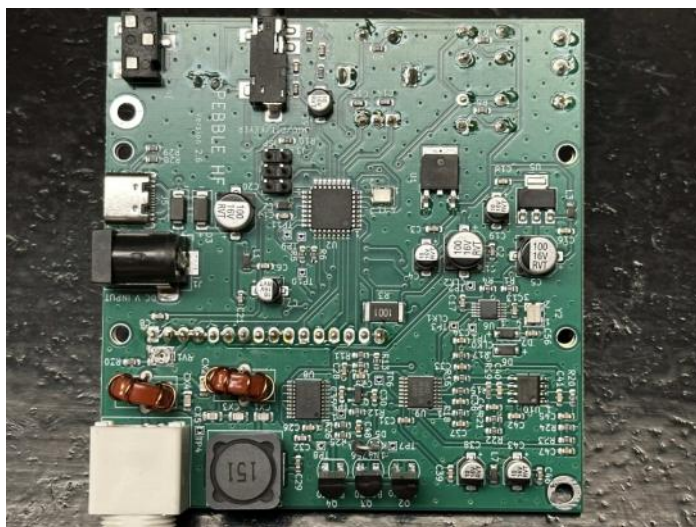


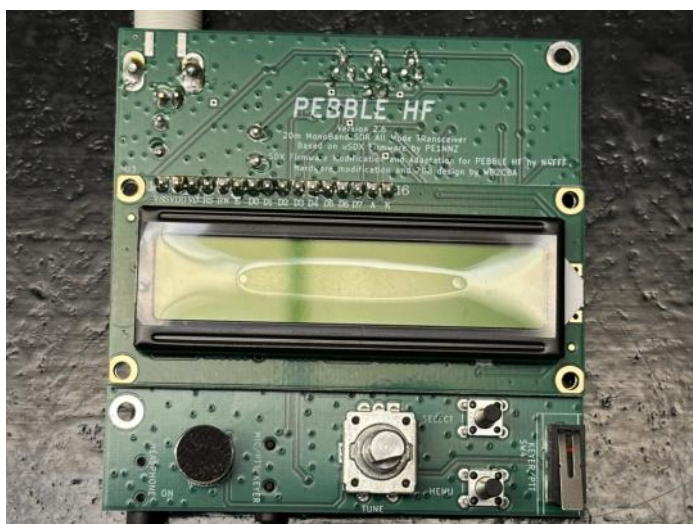
Last fall they got an idea to come up with an entry level CW and SSB QRP radio at an entry level cost - \$50. They teamed up with Barb, WB2CBA and designed the Pebble HF. It's a 20m single band 5-6 watt radio based on the uSDX radio from Guido, PE1NNZ. The uSDX was actually a spin off from QRP Labs incredibly popular QCX CW only single band radio.

This is also an entry level kit building project. It comes with everything you need to have a finished 20m QRP CW and SSB radio for under \$50. It even has a built in microphone and straight key, so all you need to supply is

a power supply or battery, headphones, and an antenna. You can add your own paddle and external microphone if you wish.

The kit itself is a mostly pre-populated surface mount PCB with only 15 through hole parts that you need to add. It comes with a compact 3D printed case and knob. It can be assembled in about an hour or two, depending on your experience level. Pretty much all you need to complete it is a soldering iron and wire snips. The PCB simply drops in the case, the cover snaps on top, and the knob is push fit on. There are no additional fasteners or tools needed.





Although it is inexpensive, it is pretty well packed with features. For SSB it has multiple filters from 3500 through 1800 Hz. It also has AM and FM modes, although these are of questionable use on 20m. For CW it has a built in iambic (A or B) keyer as well as straight key mode. CW has multiple filters from 500 down to 50 Hz. There is VOX, noise cancelling, AGC, an S meter, an attenuator, dual VFOs, RIT, a CW decoder, and practice mode for CW. It normally puts out 5-6 watts at an efficiency of 75%, but it can also be powered from a USB-C jack giving a little under a watt of power with similar efficiency.

It uses an IQ detector and potentially has the capability to send that information to a connected computer. The uSDX uses the same processor and has a few more features, so expect possible expansion of the feature list down the road. Possible CW memories, waterfall? And possibly a 40 meter version, too.

After building, I made one quick contact at 0.85 watts in the CWT, so I know it works just fine. Others have demonstrated SSB and CW activations at POTA locations. <https://qrper.com/2026/09/k6trk-us-3555-san-elijo-state-beach-qrp-with-the-pebble-hf-kit-radio/>

This is a great entry level QRP rig that can be a lot of fun for POTA or SOTA adventures or just casual QRP or QRPp contacts. Their manufacturing is just getting up to speed, but down the road this might make a great project for Smoke & Solder night at Skyview. There may even be a slight discount for a group order.

Dan — NM3A

Online Amateur License Classes

The Cuyahoga Falls Amateur Radio Club (www.cfarc.org) and Mahoning Valley Amateur Radio Association (www.mvara.org) will be conducting live online classes to help you get your Technician and/or General Class Licenses.

The Free classes will be held via Zoom and will run for eight weeks from Sunday, Oct. 4 through Sunday, Nov. 22. Sessions are from 1:30 to 4:00 PM.

All ages are welcome. For more information and/or to register, visit tiny.cc/beaham.

Enlarge PDF To View Details

A First Timers Review of Hamvention

de Brady W3BRL

At the time of writing this, I have just gotten home from my first Hamvention. At the time of publishing, it is many months later. I play more radio than write articles...

The two biggest things I heard before going up was (1) Plan for at least two days and (2) Watch out for the scooters. You guys weren't kidding!

I decided to drive up on Wednesday and attend Contest University on Thursday. I figured I would go at least once to experience it, and probably not return for a few years. After experiencing it, I will definitely be back. I talked to more people that were "first-timers" that I didn't feel that alone. It was nice to know I wasn't going into a one-day event being the only one who had never been.

The other thing you hear people talk about while at CTU or Hamvention is you never know who you might run into. I was in line for breakfast when I heard a familiar voice, the one you know only by the radio but not by face. Often times when I activate POTA on 20 meter voice, I will usually always hear this call the exact same way, "Alpha Foxtrot Zero Foxtrot". I turned around and asked "are you Mike?" Turns out, it was! It was also his first CTU, and we had a good chat about antennas, radios, etc. Fantastic guy.

Hearing from the big gun stations owners like K3LR and W3LPL was fascinating, hearing what they have to say and learn some tips from them. Frank W3LPL talked about how you can't copy station design, but you can learn from them. And learn from them I did. I made sure to "please copy" my way through the lectures, and it was a fantastic day.

After CTU, I headed up to a local park not too far from the Hope Hotel. I activated US-0732 Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park. Having no parks activated outside of Pennsylvania, this was a huge goal of mine. I wanted to try to get as many Ohio parks as I can while I was out there.

I usually start my activations on 20 meter phone, but there was another station already in the park on the same band. I didn't want to interrupt him, so I went to 40 meter phone. I had a good run going for about 15 minutes. Once it started to slow down, another group of

hams rolled into the park, and since I had already activated, I let them take 40 meters.

During every activation, I always do a call out on .52 simplex. Usually, I get one or two calls, but I figured if there was ever a place to do a 2 meter POTA activation, this was the place. I hopped on my mobile rig and checked to see if the frequency was used, and it wasn't. So I called CQ. Harry W3YJ was the first to come back, and commended my effort to doing POTA on 2 meters. Thanks Harry!

For the next 25-30 minutes, I was running guys on 2 meters. People were calling like crazy, it was fantastic! I worked Tall Guy K3STL, Mike AF0F, a few of those YouTube guys, and just some stations who wanted a 2 meter POTA contact.

Four Days in May was fantastic. A lot of folks said it was the busiest they have ever seen it, and it was packed. It was neat seeing a lot of those small items you see online in person, especially from the people who actually make the thing. I am a fan of the Ham Radio Workbench podcast, so I wanted to make sure I talked to George KJ6VU and made sure to tell him thanks for the podcast.

Then, the big day came. Hamvention. DAYTON. I drove over behind Tall Guy, who was very kind in showing me the ropes for the first time. After making my way through the front gates, I immediately went to the flea market. I wanted to get a good idea of what was out there.

The best way to describe it is "never-ending". I picked up a few things, and before I knew it, it was 12pm, and time for lunch! I made my way through one of the buildings, and ran into Randy KB3IFH and thanked him for the QSL cards I had made through him a while back. I was shocked that he remembered me, even having placed the order over a year ago.

I ran into Cousin Joe KC3PXQ and we hopped in line for the all-mighty pork sandwich. It did not disappoint. I heard a rumor that they were under new ownership, and did not expect the crowd. They handled the pileup quite well.

After lunch, I ran into some other people who I've worked many times over the air. Some guys while working POTA, some guys just on FT8, etc. I made sure to poke fun at the FT8 guys, and I made sure to tell them I'd see them in the NAQP RTTY contest. (RTTY is a fun contest mode). Ran inside to see some vendors, DXE, SignalStuff, probably ones you buy stuff from today. I spent more time talking than buying, but some of the booths I did walk away with some nifty stuff. The DXE coupon I received from CTU was put to good use.

That evening, I ran over with Tall Guy to a group POTA activation at US-1940 Caesar Creek State Park with Ham Radio Adventure Guy KE8PZN and some other fine folks.

Tall Guy let him know I was a newer guy, and PZN asked me if I had ever worked a pile up. Before I could answer, he sat me behind the mic and said

"doesn't matter, you'll do it anyway". PZN did the logging while I did the talking. We worked over 130 stations in about 40-ish minutes of operating. It was a FANTASTIC time.

I went back just to walk the vendors Saturday morning before departing for home. Made it out before the big rain storm came, and hopped in my car to head home. On my drive home, I hopped on the highway just after crossing into West Virginia, and activated US-6993 Bear Rock Lakes Wildlife Management Area. A slow activation, but managed to get it activated.

I ran into another guy going home from Hamvention, Jay N3RT. We chatted it up after activating, talking about radio, work, and some other topics. The rest of the drive home was wet, but we made it back.

If you are on the fence about going, GO. It was a great time getting to meet everyone and hear stories, browse a huge flea-market, and make new friends. I definitely plan to go back.

Brady - W3BRL



B+

de Cooky - WC3O

At the clubhouse we rely on battery power to keep our important assets up and running when the power is out, which happens quite often up there. Other than the smaller batteries in most of the UPSs (Uninterruptible Power Supply), we use a couple large truck batteries.

One battery is in the radio room and keeps all radios operating, as well as other peripheral items. The other large truck battery is used to keep our 64 repeater up and running. In all, we keep four truck batteries.

I like to replace these batteries every four years. Lead-acid batteries have a pretty predictable lifespan. After four years they start to degrade. At four years there is still plenty of life left in them, but they do drop off over time. So we have two newer batteries, plus two older batteries that we use for less critical purposes.

Thanks to a generous donation we have two brand new, high quality batteries to keep us up and running for the next four years. Again, one is under the radio bench in the radio room and one is on the 64 repeater. One of the older batteries will power a large UPS (Donated by a friend of Skyview from the WASH club) in the repeater shed, keeping the computers running.

We also use these batteries during Field Day. They work great. The wind won't blow them away either. They are HEAVY!

Thank you to the anonymous donor of these new batteries.



Cooky - WC3O
Skyview Radio Officer

Heil Proset Elite

de Cookie - WC3O

At the club we have a Heil Proset Elite headset. It is equipped with the IC mic element so that it works very well with ICOM radios. The headset came to us from our lost friend Bob, K3OFX/SK's estate.



Apparently, the plastic components on the headset are somewhat allergic to skin oils and over time, deteriorate and fall apart. It wasn't pretty.



Luckily, Heil sells kits and components to repair their popular headsets.

And at a reasonable price. I looked the kit up on the Heil website, and as luck would have it - They were out of stock. I grabbed the part number and did a search. R and L in Ohio had one in stock! I ordered it up and we are off to the races.



I've rebuilt our regular Heil Proset headsets before, but the Proset Elite is much more complicated. The ear cups articulate in multiple

ways and there are lots of parts that need to be reassembled in the correct order.

There is a very fine multi conductor wire that needs to be threaded through some very tight places. Lots of itty-bitty screws of slightly different lengths. It was no fun.

The only remaining issue with them is that the phase switch does not work correctly. The wires pulled off of the switch and I am not sure where they are to go. I stared at it with no success. The way it is now, both ear cups only work with the switch in one position. When I get some time and remember to do so, I'll email Heil to find out the correct wiring. Until then, they work.

In the end the headset is back in very good condition. Be sure to use the right Heil adaptor, with no blocking capacitor. The electret mic element needs the 8 volts from the radio to work. That is the IC element specifically designed for ICOM radios.





If I had to do this again - I'd send it back to Heil to re-build. It was a pain.

Unfortunately, the popular Heil Proset headsets are discontinued due to Heil losing their supplier. (I learned at Dayton)

Might be a good idea to order some spare parts. Maybe Heil will come out with a new version.

Time will tell.

Thank all I got

Cookie - WC3O
Skyview Radio Officer

Ten is All I Need ? de Brady - W3BRL

After pulling some serious hours at work, my boss called me and said "TAKE TIME OFF" and so I asked her if I could play radio, and she told me "I don't care what you do, just don't come here", so not come "here" is what I did.

For those that know me know that I am a big Parks on the Ait (POTA) guy. I don't get out often, but most of my operating is done from a park. I activated all the parks within about a 45-minute drive from my QTH, so decided to head south towards the West Virginia/Maryland boarder one day and headed East on another.

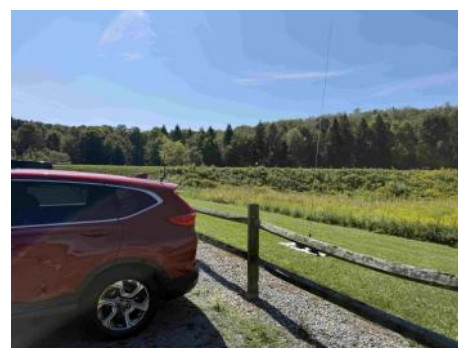
I was able to activate 5 new entities on this two-day extravaganza, including Forbes State



Forest, Laurel Caverns State Park, Yellow Creek State Park, and a few game lands.

I usually like to "park and bark" and stay at each park for about an hour or two to get as many QSO's as I can, but when activating this many parks in a day, it is usually faster to get your 10 and move on.

For those that don't know, you only need 10 contacts to successfully activate a park! Those can be CW, SSB, FM, satellite, anything that confirms a 2-way contact.



If you get some free time, check out the POTA map! You may be surprised at just how close you are to a park entity. Oftentimes, you can activate the park within a few minutes if conditions are just right.

Hope to hear you out there, and maybe... Park to park?

Brady - W3BRL

Out with the Old - In with the Refurb

de Cooky - WC30

Up the joint, for many years we've run refurbished computers. They have consistently given us good service and come with a fresh coat of WINDOWS to start out with.

The computers we've recently replaced have been in place for many years. They were i5 processors, solid state drives and a decent amount of memory. For some reason the two outer computers slowed down greatly.

The leftmost station (Green) got to the point where it was unusable. I had a couple of our members that are crazy good with computers look at the Green station computer, to no avail.

I suspect it is related to looking at sports and music websites. I suspect that these sites load all kinds of crap on computers when you're not looking. I have no proof, but I suspect.

The choice was to either go scorched earth and start over with a fresh coat of WINDOWS 10 or replace our four computers with something better. I thought it would be better in the long haul if we got new (Refurb) i7 computers. I think it was the right choice. Time goes forward, not backward.

Through a generous donation, four new (Refurb) computers were purchased. i7 8700 CPUs, 16 gig of RAM and 447 GB solid state drives. Reusing our existing monitors we needed to purchase DisplayPort to DVI video adaptors for three of the stations.

So we are now running WINDOWS 11. (But I was really enjoying the lack of updates with our WINDOWS 10)

Joel, KC3LVG handled the transfers and I did the tweeking to get N1MM/MMTTY/2tone working. Joel handled getting WSJT+ and related digital programs configured. FLDigi, Winlink, VARA and more.

Downloading drivers for radios and other devices. Configuring COM ports. Getting remote control of the rotors through N1MM. Restoring ini files. Restoring shortcuts and much more. There was a fair amount of work that needed to be performed. Times 4.

In the end, we are back up and running. The new (Refurb) computers are performing well. Hopefully they will last for many years.

I ask that folks refrain from looking at sports and music sites. No good can come from it.

MANY thanks to all involved including the anonymous donor that paid for the machines.

NOT THE END OF THE STORY:

Now that I mentioned that we have had no issues with refurbished computers, the new GREEN computer crapped out.

It appears to be an issue with the motherboard. I contacted Newegg and they are sending us another computer, sans the SSD drive. It (should) be a simple transfer. Hopefully this will be a loan event. Time will tell.

Cooky - WC30
Skyview Radio Officer



From General to Extra - Really Using My License

de Joel - KC3LVG

My First Year of Really Using my Ham License

I received my Technician license on July 19, 2018. But I originally got it for a completely different reason than the way I use amateur radio today. At the time I was interested in FPV drone flying using cameras and video goggles. After experimenting with it, I realized I wasn't really using the amateur-radio privileges, and the license mostly sat unused.

During COVID I bought a Baofeng UV-5R and listened to some local activity, but I was still intimidated by actually getting on the air. I didn't know when to talk, what I should say, or the normal on-air etiquette. I had a license, but I wasn't really participating in amateur radio.

That finally changed in August 2025.

Deciding to Try Again

The decision actually came after trying something completely unrelated to radio. I had tried getting involved in martial arts and realized it wasn't for me. I also came to the conclusion that if I was going to seriously pursue it, I probably should have started much earlier.

That made me look at some of the other interests I already had. I still had my amateur radio license, so I decided to see what else I could do with it. HF seemed like the next step, and on August 17, 2025, I passed my General exam online. Two days later, I attended my first Skyview Radio Society meeting.

My First Contacts

At that August 19 meeting, a club member helped me get on the air. I made three POTA hunter contacts on 20-meter SSB. Those were my first amateur radio contacts.

I was still nervous. Passing the exam had taught me the material necessary to earn the license, but it didn't teach me how a normal contact was supposed to flow. I was still thinking about when I was supposed to talk, what I should say, and whether I was doing it correctly. Having another club member there to help me through those first three contacts made it much easier.

A few days later, I attended the Skyview Hamfest and watched a presentation about Parks on the Air. POTA

looked like something I would enjoy because it combined radio with portable equipment, antennas, experimenting, and solving problems.

My First POTA Activation

On August 26, AC3IE took me out for my first Parks on the Air (POTA) activation. That was also where I was introduced to FT8. Digital modes gave me another way to get on the air while I was still getting comfortable with voice, and FT8 quickly became the mode I used most often at home.

I bought a Xiegu X6100 and a JPC-12 portable vertical because I wanted a portable antenna system that I knew would work while I was learning. Once I had something that worked, I started experimenting with other antennas and ways to improve the setup.

My First Solo Contact

On September 12, I made my first completely solo HF contact. That contact was important because I did the entire process myself. I set up my radio and antenna, tuned the antenna, called CQ on FT8, and somebody answered.

There wasn't another operator beside me telling me what to do next. I had assembled the station, gotten the antenna working, put out a call, and made the contact without help. That gave me confidence that I could take the equipment somewhere, set everything up, troubleshoot it, and get on the air myself.

Learning by Building Antennas

The JPC-12 gave me a working portable antenna, but it didn't take long before I started building antennas of my own. Wire antennas were inexpensive, gave me more capability for the money, and gave me a way to learn how antennas actually worked by building and using them.

Twenty meters became my main POTA band, and I eventually wanted something that was easy to deploy without putting a wire into a tree. I can usually get things into trees. Getting them back out is the problem.

That eventually led me to a 20-meter dipole using two telescoping whips. Like most of my antenna projects, it came from research followed by trial and error. I would build something, try it, figure out what I didn't like, and make

another change.

The telescoping-whip dipole has become one of my favorite portable antennas. I've had several operators tell me that my signal is clear and loud. That isn't a controlled antenna comparison, but the reports have been encouraging, and the antenna has worked well enough that I continue to use it.

Going for Extra

By late 2025, I was spending much more time on HF. I would occasionally work AC3LX on FT8 and try to hear him when he was operating SSB. At one point he mentioned that he would be operating in a portion of 20 meters where my General privileges didn't extend.

That gave me a practical reason to go for Extra.

I started studying for the Amateur Extra exam on December 1 and studied through December 19. Some of the material covered things I had already started doing and helped explain them better. Other sections introduced things I hadn't encountered yet.

On December 20, 2025, I passed the Amateur Extra exam. I had gone from General to Extra in about four months.

My First Solo POTA Activation

On December 19, the day before passing my Extra, I had completed my first solo POTA activation. It was below freezing, and because I was operating alone I had to bring everything I needed, set up the entire station, make the contacts, and tear everything back down myself.

By then I had already started modifying my portable equipment. I had designed radial reels that kept the wires organized and made them faster to deploy and retrieve. In freezing weather, that mattered. The less time I had to spend standing outside trying to untangle wire with cold hands, the better.

That activation reinforced something I've continued to see with portable radio: equipment that seems fine at home can reveal completely different problems once it is cold, windy, raining, or being assembled alone in a parking lot.

After that December 19 activation, every POTA activation I did until the 20-POTA day the following July was solo. That meant I had to figure out my own setup, operating routine, troubleshooting process, and what equipment worked for the way I wanted to operate.

Adding 3D Printing

3D printing also started becoming part of my radio projects. I didn't originally think of that as anything unusual. A 3D printer was simply another tool that I already had.

If I needed a strain relief, wire winder, antenna part, or another small component, I could design and print one. I used 3D printing while building a homemade DX Commander-style antenna, made strain reliefs and wire winders, and gradually started designing more parts for portable radio equipment.

In February 2026, I was volunteered to give a presentation at Skyview about 3D printing. Someone had pointed out that other members would probably be interested in it. I explained the basics of 3D printing and showed some of the ways I was using it in amateur radio.

I had only been actively involved in amateur radio for about six months, but I already had something from my own background that I could contribute. That is one of the things I've come to appreciate about a club. I might be asking someone for antenna advice one night and explaining 3D printing to somebody else the next.

Twenty Parks in One UTC Day

By the summer of 2026, POTA had become one of the main ways I operated. My original goal for July 25 UTC was to activate 10 parks in One UTC Day (8:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. local time). AC3LX suggested trying for 20.

My response was basically, "If you can find parks close enough to do it, I'll try."

I knew that if we were going to reach 20, I would need to complete some parks during the initial evening portion of the UTC day, before doing my main drive. I completed four park references the evening before (from 8:00 p.m. to midnight local time).

Then on July 25, from about 7:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. Eastern time, AC3LX and I completed the remaining 16. Altogether, the challenge covered 20 park references from 16 physical locations and covered more than 300 miles.

The operation involved SSB, FT8, FT4, multiple antenna systems, equipment problems, navigation problems, changing band conditions, and a lot of adapting as the day went on. By that point, figuring out those problems had become part of how I operated.

My concerns had changed considerably from the previous August. Instead of worrying about what I was supposed to say during a contact, I was worrying about how to make an entire portable station faster to deploy between twenty activations.

(See later article for more detail about this adventure)

Learning From Other Operators

One thing that changed after the 20-POTA trip was that I started operating with other people more often. Until then, other than my first activation with AC3IE, I had done my POTA operating by myself.

Going out with other operators let me see different ways of doing the same thing. AC3LX had his own approach to handling SSB contacts, and later I also operated with K3STL and saw another style.

That helped with my microphone fright more than memorizing any particular script could have. I could listen to how different people handled contacts, see what worked for them, and develop a style that felt natural to me.

The biggest improvement still came from simply making contacts. The more I operated, the less I had to think about every individual step.

The Value of an Active Club

Skyview accelerated my learning considerably. There are enough members with enough different interests that somebody has tried almost everything at least once. If I have a question about an antenna, radio, operating mode, or project, there is usually someone who can give me an answer, point me in the right direction, or tell me what happened when they tried it.

Thursday Smoke and Solder nights have been especially useful. They give me a chance to bring something I'm working on, ask questions, see what other people are building, and sometimes get some extra radio time. I've also used the club station to chase DX and try things I couldn't necessarily do from home.

I still have to build things, make mistakes, and figure things out myself. Having experienced people around simply makes that process much faster.

One Year Later

One of the biggest surprises has been how much amateur radio overlaps with other things I was already interested in. Electronics, computers, networking, 3D printing, building things, and troubleshooting all have places in the hobby.

I've also been surprised by how many different directions there are to explore. POTA led me into portable antennas. Portable antennas led me into more antenna building. Building antennas led to more 3D-printed parts. Digital modes led to experimenting with computers and portable stations. Operating with other people eventually helped me become more comfortable on SSB.

Every time I learn how to do one thing, it seems to expose several more things I haven't tried yet.

I'm also much more comfortable on the microphone than I was a year ago. I still make mistakes and occasionally stumble through a contact, but that doesn't stop me from getting on the air anymore.

If I could give advice to somebody who has a license but isn't using it, the first thing I would say is not to wait until you understand everything. You won't. Microphone fright is common, and the only way I found to get past it was to make contacts.

Find an active club. Watch how different people operate. Ask questions. Try things yourself. A license is only the beginning. There are a lot more directions this hobby can take you once you actually start using it.

Joel - KC3LVG



<https://docs.pota.app/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/FT8>

<https://wsjtx.github.io/wsjtx/index.html>

How to SOTA or POTA ... or Not!

de Dan - NM3A

We spent a week in Georgia with our three granddaughters and their parents. It was hot, but not unbearably so. At least not so much that the girls' softball practices and games weren't cancelled. Middle girl had a 2 RBI hit and played some awesome defense! Lots of card games played, too.

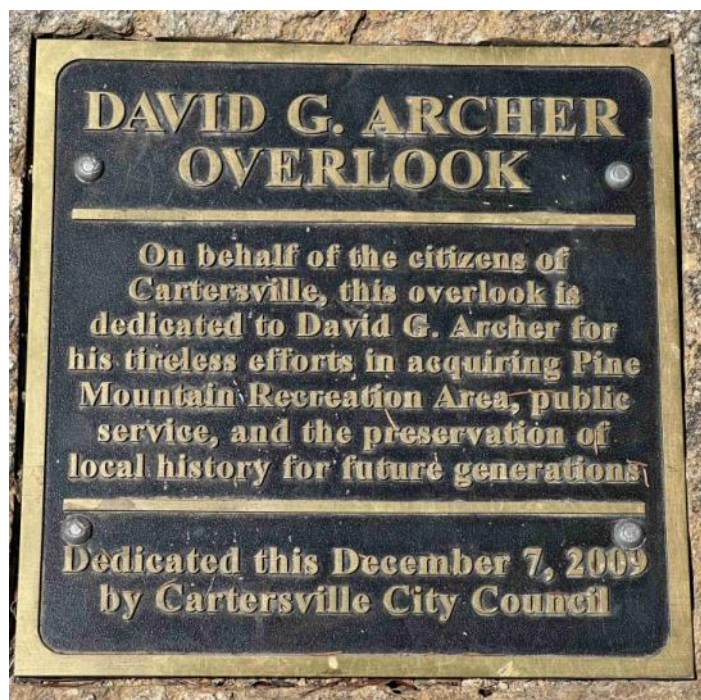
Come Tuesday, they were all back in school, so I went out to play in the mountains.



First up was a repeat visit to Pine Mountain, Summits on the Air (SOTA) site W4G/HC-036. It's a pleasant mile hike to a nice 2 point peak with a great view south towards Atlanta.



My gratitude to Mr Archer for making this a great recreation site.



I set up on some shaded rocks near the peak with my usual set up of a QMX mid band, Putikeeg paddle, Bioenno 3 Ahr 12V battery, and a homemade 40m EFOCF dipole as a sloper into the trees.



My selfie shows part of the view from the peak.



Hard to see, but over my shoulder is a faint view of the Atlanta skyline 40 miles to the southeast and Kennesaw Mountain just to the right of the city. This better view shows Atlanta, Kennesaw, and Little Kennesaw more clearly.



The more obvious peak in the foreground is Vineyard Mountain, W4G/HC-043.

Conditions were just okay on W4G/HC-036. There weren't too many chasers out there, but I got six good CW contacts in in about 10 minutes.

Then I packed up and headed down as I was hoping for a second activation.



Fortunately for a few dung beetles, someone had forgotten their doggie poop bags. There were a few beetles neatly cleaning up the trail for us. I spent a few minutes watching as they rolled their prizes down the path, presumably to their happy hideaway.



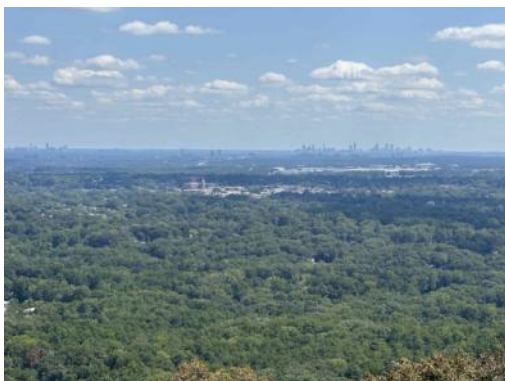
Twenty miles south of Pine Mountain is another favorite SOTA peak of mine. It's Kennesaw Mountain, just west of Marietta, GA. Two point Kennesaw Mountain, W4G/CE-001, was the site of a significant battle just before General Sherman marched into Atlanta during the American Civil War. It's a very prominent peak as most of the area around it is fairly flat. It can be seen as the prominence to the right of Atlanta, off in the distance in the view from Pine Mountain above.

Kennesaw is part of Kennesaw National Battlefield Memorial Park, US-0711.



The mountain is a nice one mile hike from the visitors center. Along the way are numerous historical information markers.

As with Pine Mountain, it is nicely shaded the whole way to the peak and Atlanta is easily visible 20 miles to the southeast.



This is also a repeat park for me and I set up in my usual location beside a period canon near the USGS marker at the summit.



My setup was the same as for the morning activation. Again, not that many chasers were on, but I did get 11 QSOs. In the middle of those, I had a very pleasant 20 minute rag chew with a ham a few miles away, who was set up in a park. We had a nice long chat on CW. He likes doing QRP portable, although he doesn't seek out POTA locations.

Qs started picking up later in the afternoon, but by then it was time to head back to home base on the other side of Marietta by the base of two point Sweat Mountain, W4G/CE-002. This has only been activated twice. Unfortunately the top is generally off limits due to a myriad of commercial antennas. Fences, gates, and no trespassing signs are everywhere. I spoke with a local ham who had activated it about 8 years ago. He tagged along with a friend who had business to work on systems on the mountain. Alas, no luck getting a ride up. Maybe someday

This was a short visit and I did not have the opportunity to activate any other sites. There are a ton of mountains in the north of Georgia, just waiting for me. Someday, I'll get to a few of them. And I still have my eye on Stone Mountain, W4G/CE-003. This has a very interesting geology. It is literally one gigantic bare granite stone that pokes up over 500 feet above the surrounding flat terrain just east of Atlanta. Someday

Now that we are retired, we usually split our trip to Georgia and back into two days. That usually gives me some time to activate Parks on the Air (POTA) or Summits on the Air (SOTA) sites.

I have had my sights on Mount Mitchell, W4C/CM-001, in North Carolina for quite some time.



This was my year.

We left on Friday, Sep 11th and drove straight to Mount Mitchell State Park, US-2747, which is in Pisgah National Forest, US-4510, about 20 miles east of Asheville, NC..

At 6684 feet, Mount Mitchell is the highest point east of the Mississippi River.

You have to go to the western edge of the Great Plains to find higher peaks.



Like the Great Smoky Mountains nearby, it frequently pokes through the clouds and often has little visibility at the summit.

We were lucky to have great views while we were up there. It was hazy, but still visibility was 70 to 80 miles.

This is a drive-up that is just off the Blue Ridge National Parkway, US-3378.



The actual summit is a short quarter mile walk from the parking lot.

I had great plans for this. I intended to get my 4 first contacts for my SOTA activation with my 2 meter HT on FM. Then I would get 6 more for the POTA activation using HF CW.

This is where things started to go downhill. (Well, not literally!) I started calling CQ on 146.52. Then I realized that I should spot myself. Well, that didn't go well - no cell service, and Starlink didn't work either. So I plugged on with 2m. I got a couple of Qs quickly, but then it got harder. I had a few callers but couldn't complete the contact. It was probably difficult for others to hear my 5 watt signal into a 1/4 wave whip.

But a bigger problem for me was that I couldn't open the squelch! I hadn't used my Yaesu VX-7R in quite a while and I had forgotten how to change settings on the radio! Try as I might, I couldn't figure out the squelch settings. I finally did manage to eke out 4 QSOs on 2m, but it was a struggle and I'm sure it was just as frustrating for those on the other end.

This was a good reminder for me to actually *USE* my radios regularly. I finally did manage to figure out how to change settings, but that was *after* I was home and read the manual. The middle of an activation is probably not the time to learn a new (or relearn an old) radio! I did not bring my Quangsheng HT that I modified for CW, but that might have been just as frustrating as I have not used that at all, only tested it.

So, after a frustrating time on FM, I figured that HF CW would be a breeze with this elevation. I set up my same setup with my EFOCF dipole laid over the top of a fence at the summit.

Unfortunately, this was also a struggle. I finally did manage to get myself spotted for POTA, but not for SOTA.

I started to get some callers, then my paddle gave me fits and I had to take time to get that straightened out. There went those callers!



Once I was back on the air, I had a few more callers and then my pen quit on me! There went a couple more Qs while I asked for repeats. I finally got a total of 5 Qs on 20m CW. Conditions did not seem to be good, and the low antenna deployment was certainly part of the problem.

After an hour with no better luck, I decided to call it a day. At least I had the SOTA activation completed, even if I was one short for a POTA activation.

Reluctantly we walked back, spent some time in the museum, and I bought a hiking stick medallion. As we walked back to the parking lot, it hit me! I have a 50 watt 2 meter radio right there in the car! And since the only thing I needed more Qs for was POTA, I could try again.

In 5 minutes, I added another 4 QSOs on 2m and completed the two-fer: SOTA and POTA! The simplex contacts ranged from a P2P 20 miles away in the Great Smokies to a mobile 100 miles away in South Carolina. It's amazing what that elevation will do for you on VHF.

The park has numerous radio towers on nearby Clingman's Peak. One of them is the N2GE repeater on 145.19 MHz. It is completely open with no PL tone. Although it only runs 5 watts (with a gain antenna, of course), it can be used across 5 states. As it has emergency back up power, it was a lifeline to the area when Hurricane Helene devastated the area in the fall of 2024. Parts of the Blue Ridge Parkway north of the mountain are still closed due to damage from Helene.

The rest of our trip home was uneventful, if non-radio-active. The moral of the story is - use your radios regularly, and make sure everything in your pack is there and working, so you don't have the frustrations I did!

Dan - NM3A



It's always somethin

de Cooky - WC3O

In the lower yard of the clubhouse there are two 72 foot high self-supporting vertical antennas - one on either side of the driveway. This is an 80 meter phased array. It is used for transmitting (and receiving).

The nice thing about using this phased array is that you can electrically "aim" the direction by controlling how the two vertical antennas are fed (phased).

The DX Engineering Phasing Unit gives us three options - Pointed towards Europe, pointed towards the South-west, or Omni-directional. It's a great antenna for DX.

Another advantage of this system is that the SWR is good all the way from the CW section of the band (Lower) to the phone section of the band (Upper).

That's big considering that with our two 80 meter dipoles, the SWR goes up dramatically as you move away from the resonant frequency of the antenna. A tuner is needed to use our radios/amplifiers.

The two base towers are recycled BX tower sections, (Originally designed and manufactured by Rohn Tower, currently manufactured by Thomas and Shelby in Ohio).

The two tower bases rest on insulators. Each antennas has a wire ground plane.

I added a long aluminum mast to the top of each of these towers to extend the total length to the 72 feet needed for the 80 meter band.

Using these long aluminum masts allows these 72 foot antennas to be MUCH lighter than they would be if the towers had to extend all the way up to 72 feet. The masts neck down from 2 inch diameter to (maybe?) 1/4 tubing.

One day I drove up to the clubhouse and pulled in. Hmmmm - Why is one tower so short?

Damn! The long mast on one of the towers broke off right where it goes up through the top of the tower. The mast came to rest in the yard.



Some of the tubing sections got damaged and the broken 2 inch section would need to be replaced.



Spare parts to the rescue!

Luckily, we had all of the tubing to make the repairs.

I cobbled together the new mast and left it on the ground, up by the plastic shed.

During that time, we were also working on removing some trees on the other side of the driveway. I was concerned about the trees possibly damaging the other 80 meter tower as they fell. We lowered that tower and moved it to a safe location. It turned out that this was a good idea, as one of the trees would have hit that tower.



When I rebuilt the mast that had broken I slid a section of tubing up inside the 2 inch mast so that it is double-walled where the mast comes up through the top of the tower - In hopes that it doesn't break again in the future.

While the other tower was down I wanted to do the same thing to that mast, again in hope that it doesn't break in the future. It was challenging to get the inner tube slid up inside the 2 inch mast because the bracket clamps had made the original 2 inch tube out of round. It took some doing but in the end we got it done!

As always, this project took MUCH longer than I was hoping. There were other projects that we wanted to tackle first such as cutting, splitting and stacking fire-wood plus replacing/building three new picnic tables. Not to mention other items that broke and needed attention, Field Day and other events.

With the CQWW RTTY contest coming up at the end of September I figured we'd better get the phased array back online.



It took three people to raise and lower the towers. Two people on the tower sections and one to handle the long mast, since it bends severely while the tower is still horizontal.

The two towers are now back up! Ready for DX action.



Thanks to all that helped out along the way. It's nice to have them back.

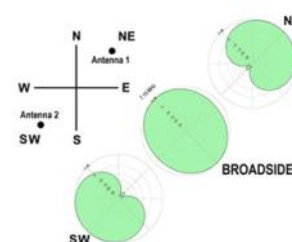
Cooky - WC3O
Skyview Radio Officer

DX Engineering DVA Dual Vertical Array Systems

★★★★★ Write the First Review Part Number: DXE-DVA-80B-P



DX Engineering Dual Vertical Arrays systems offer improved performance in all respects, replacing the legacy COMTEK PVS-2. The installed system produces two opposite End-Fire Cardioid patterns and one Broadside-Omni pattern, as shown here. Heavy-duty relay unit components handle over 2 kW continuous RF power for enhanced performance at low SWR over a wide bandwidth. End-fire directional patterns achieve a real front-to-back over 20 dB with typical array forward gain up to 3 dB over a single vertical. This DVA system provides excellent bandwidth under 2:1 SWR, covering about 300 kHz of the 80 meter band, dependent upon the verticals installed.



Twenty POTA Activations in One UTC Day

de Joel - KC3LVG

Like most ambitious Parks on the Air (POTA) ideas, this one started smaller.

My original goal was to complete a Rhino by activating 10 parks in one UTC day. I had attempted Warthog-level activation days before, so 10 already felt like a worthwhile challenge. AC3LX had a different idea. He wanted to try for 20.

Twenty parks sounded like swinging for the fences. I did not know if propagation, travel time, equipment problems, or some unexpected delay would stop us. Still, the real goal was not only the number.

AC3LX and I knew each other from college and worked together for about five years. We had talked off and on since then, but we had not really spent time together since college. This gave us a chance to reconnect while sharing a hobby.

We planned the trip for several months. July 25 was simply the day both of us had available.

By the time it was over, we had activated 20 POTA references from 16 physical locations, made 236 actual contacts, generated 274 submitted park records, traveled more than 300 miles, and spent 28 hours and 16 minutes from the time I left home until I returned.

Starting the Clock

The POTA UTC day began at 8:00 p.m. Eastern time on July 24. I wanted to use the evening before the main drive to stack a few parks.

I left home around 7:01 p.m. and drove to the 40th Street Bridge. I parked there because I did not want to pay for downtown parking. I used to bike from the bridge to the old jail, so I already knew the routes into town.



From the bridge, I rode a scooter to Point State Park while carrying my Icom IC-7300, a battery box, and a portable vertical antenna.



Point State Park was valuable because it qualified as a three-fer. One physical operating location counted for three POTA references. Knocking out three parks from one setup was a quick way to start the challenge.

The trip from home to the bridge, the scooter ride, and setup took about 50 minutes.

The first activation went smoothly, other than my 18.5-foot telescoping whip falling apart while I was extending it. Fortunately, I had brought a spare.

I try to follow the rule that two is one and one is none.

The antenna failure did not threaten the next day because the whip was not going to be the primary antenna for the main route. I changed antennas and kept operating.

The three-fer was completed in less than 20 minutes of radio time. It was a good start, but it still felt like only the beginning.

After packing up, I rode the scooter back to the bridge and drove to US-8900, the State Game Lands 203 extension near my house. That location was accessible after hours, and I knew I could operate without bothering anyone.

The second activation also went smoothly.

By the time I stopped for the night, I had already completed four park references. I had wanted five, but sleep and preparation were more important than forcing one more activation into the evening.

I got home around 9:30 p.m., charged batteries, left most of the radio equipment in the car, and slept for about five and a half hours.

The Main Day Begins

I woke up around 5:30 a.m. and left home at approximately 5:51.

I was not tired. I was wired and ready to go.

The morning began with a small complication. AC3LX had forgotten his battery and was running late. It was not a serious problem, but it was a reminder that even a carefully planned trip can begin with an unexpected delay.

The drive to the first site took about an hour and 20 minutes. We arrived near Laurel Caverns shortly after 7:00 a.m., and the first contact there was logged around 7:34.

The route had been planned by AC3LX. He tried to keep the parks close together, with most drives in the 15-to-30-minute range. We knew the parks were available, but we had not personally inspected every parking area or operating location beforehand. Once we reached each park, we found a legal and practical place to operate.

That approach worked most of the day.

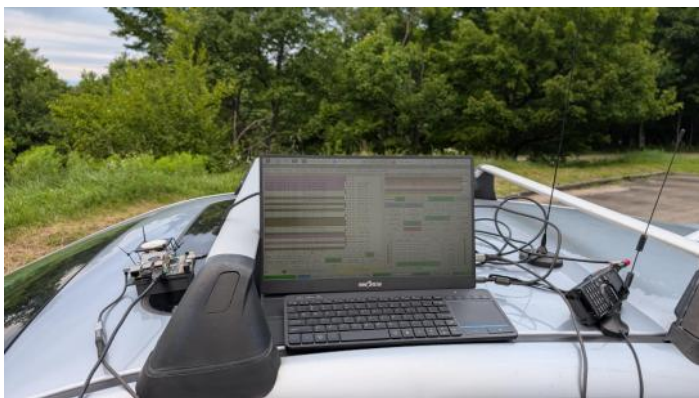
Two Stations with Different Jobs

Our operating method was based on division of labor.

AC3LX used a Yaesu FT-991A with 20-meter and 40-meter hamsticks mounted magnetically on the roof of his vehicle. His radio was installed inside the car, which allowed him to begin operating almost immediately after parking.

He could usually be on the air in under a minute.

I used an Icom IC-7300 with a Raspberry Pi 5 running WSJT-X. My equipment included a 15.6-inch InnoView portable monitor, a Bluetooth keyboard with a touchpad, a GPS puck, and separate battery power for the Pi.



The GPS puck served two important purposes. It gave me the current Maidenhead grid square, and it allowed the Pi to maintain accurate time when internet service was unavailable. That was especially important for FT8 and FT4.

The Pi controlled the IC-7300 directly and logged the digital activity to the WSJT-X files.

My station took longer to deploy than AC3LX's. While he began calling CQ on SSB, I raised the mast, installed antennas, connected the radio and Pi, and prepared the digital station.

The Raspberry Pi itself worked well. The weakness was the physical loadout. The monitor, keyboard, GPS puck, power cables, radio cables, and other pieces took time to unpack and connect repeatedly.

Before another large rove, I want to make the Pi station much easier to deploy.

The Antenna Systems

We used several antennas throughout the trip.

AC3LX mainly relied on his vehicle-mounted 20-meter and 40-meter hamsticks. That gave us a fast park-and-bark option.

My main system used a 25-foot mast with a 20-meter elevated dipole and a six-meter Squalo. I also had a 20-meter vertical available.



The elevated dipole was the same two-whip design I had developed for earlier POTA activations. The mast used a vehicle mount and could be raised in less than a minute.

The full mast system was used at most stops. Only a few locations required us to rely on the faster antenna arrangements.

The biggest antenna problem involved the six-meter Squalo. Its tuning mechanism was somewhat unreliable. I used a NanoVNA to check it, but sometimes adjustments did not change the reading. When it would not tune properly, I stopped troubleshooting and moved on.

In a 20-park operation, spending too long solving one antenna problem can threaten the whole schedule.

Unfortunately, I eventually left the NanoVNA behind at one of the parks.

That was one of the clearest equipment lessons from the trip. Small diagnostic tools are easy to place on a roof, tailgate, table, or the ground during setup. They are also easy to overlook when packing quickly.

Sharing Antennas

Although AC3LX and I had separate radios, the antennas were treated as shared resources.

AC3LX usually began on his vehicle-mounted 20- or 40-meter hamstick. If his antenna was not performing well, I deployed one of mine for him to use. At some locations, we swapped antennas after his SSB pileup slowed down so that I could begin digital operation or so he could try another band.

Early in the day, I regularly deployed the six-meter Squalo because I was trying to work toward the POTA Six Pack award. Later, I learned that I had misunderstood part of the award requirements, so I stopped installing the six-meter antenna at every location.

When the Squalo was already deployed, AC3LX sometimes used it after finishing his primary SSB operation and made a few six-meter contacts of his own.

At the park where we performed the five-watt six-meter test, AC3LX mentioned that there was a station he had been trying to work but could not reach with his existing antenna. I deployed my Faraday-cloth ground plane and vertical to give him a stronger signal and another chance at the contact.

That became another example of why carrying multiple antenna options was valuable. We were not locked into “his antenna” and “my antenna.” We used whichever system gave us the best chance of completing the activation.

A Flexible Operating Plan

Before the trip, we agreed that we would not stay committed to a dead frequency for too long.

If we were not making progress after about 10 minutes, we would change bands, switch modes, or use digital to grind out the remaining contacts.

AC3LX handled most of the SSB operation. I handled digital and the larger antenna setup.

Digital was our insurance policy.

Settling into a Rhythm

After several parks, the process became almost automatic.

AC3LX handled navigation, and I followed him from park to park. We used two meters for car-to-car communication.

Once we reached a site, we parked beside each other so I would not have as far to run between my station and his. That was something I learned during the first activation.



By the fourth activation, I had also learned to install my mast on the side of my car closest to AC3LX. These small placement decisions saved time every time I needed to move between setting up antennas and taking my part in one of his SSB contacts.



AC3LX could begin operating almost immediately because his FT-991A and hamsticks were already installed in his vehicle. While he called CQ, I started raising the mast, connecting antennas, and setting up the Raspberry Pi station.

I kept one eye on AC3LX while I worked. When he held out his hand, I knew he had told the hunter that there was a second operator. I would stop what I was doing, run over, exchange my callsign and signal report, and then return to the antenna setup.

At some parks, AC3LX completed the activation before I could fully deploy my station. At the second location on July 25, he reached the minimum number of contacts before I had finished setting up.

That became a running joke during the day. As long as I was busy putting up antennas, the activations seemed to go smoothly. Whenever I decided not to deploy and simply waited for AC3LX to park and bark, the activation seemed to take longer.

Our routine became:

- Confirm the park reference.

- Post the activation.

- AC3LX begins SSB immediately.

- I deploy the mast, antennas, and digital station.

- I watch for AC3LX's signal that a hunter is ready for the second operator.

- We use digital or another band when SSB slows down.

- We reach at least 11 contacts.

- We perform a minimal teardown and move to the next site.

Setup time varied from about one minute to 10 minutes. The mast itself could be raised quickly, but tuning, connecting cables, positioning antennas, and working in confined spaces added time.

The repeated setup and teardown eventually became reflexive.

Equipment Left on the Roof

Moving quickly introduced another problem: equipment kept ending up on top of the vehicles.

At the second location on July 25, I left my Verizon hotspot on the roof of the car. We had to turn around, return to the site, and find it.

Later, at the location before our six-meter experiment, I accidentally left the hotspot on the roof again. Fortunately, we caught the mistake before it became another lost piece of equipment.

The hotspot worked better in weak-signal areas than either of our phones because it had a better antenna. That made it useful enough that I often placed it on the roof where it had fewer obstructions and a better chance of maintaining service.



The problem was that anything placed on the roof could easily be forgotten during a rushed teardown.

The NanoVNA was not as fortunate. I eventually left it behind at one of the parks.

Small diagnostic tools, hotspots, GPS receivers, and other accessories are easy to place on a roof, tailgate, table, or the ground during setup. They are also easy to overlook when the goal is to pack quickly and reach the next activation.

A future improvement will be a roof-rack system with designated mounting points for equipment that needs an unobstructed position. The hotspot, GPS receiver, and similar devices need a secure place where they can remain visible and connected without simply being laid loose on the roof.

I also want the roof-rack system to help carry or support the mast. A dedicated mast position could make deployment faster while reducing the number of loose pieces being moved around at every stop.



The NanoVNA loss also showed the need for a short departure checklist. Before leaving each park, we should confirm that the radios, batteries, hotspots, diagnostic equipment, mast parts, feed lines, and tools are all accounted for.

Minimal Teardowns and Tangled Cables

Most teardowns were intentionally minimal.

We were trying to save every possible minute, so cables were often disconnected and placed into the vehicle without being carefully coiled or organized. That saved time at the park but created another problem later in the day: cables became tangled.

The Raspberry Pi, monitor, GPS puck, radio interface, power leads, USB cables, feed lines, and antenna connections all had to be handled repeatedly. By the later activations, cable management was becoming another part of the setup delay.

A future project will be a better cable-reel system designed specifically for rapid deployment. The goal is not only neat storage. The reels need to let me pull out exactly the amount of cable needed, connect it quickly, and wind it back in without creating knots or twists.

The Pi station also needs to become a more integrated package. The computer itself worked well, but repeatedly deploying the screen, keyboard, GPS puck, power, radio connection, and supporting cables took too much time.

Working Around Interference

Parking beside each other improved operating speed because I did not have to run as far between stations. By the fourth activation, placing the mast on the side closest to AC3LX's vehicle had become part of the normal setup.

The tradeoff was that the antennas and radios were operating close to one another.

The most obvious interference occurred when I transmitted digitally on six meters while AC3LX was receiving on 20 meters. My transmission appeared as static in his receiver.

When that happened, I stopped transmitting until his SSB pileup was finished. Preserving a productive voice run was more important than forcing simultaneous operation.

The interference mostly affected our ability to operate at the same time. It did not prevent us from completing the parks, but it reduced the efficiency advantage of having two radios and several antennas available.

Building band-pass filters is now on my future-project list. Better filtering could allow one station to operate on six meters while the other works 20 or 40 meters without overloading the receiver.

Greater antenna separation would also help, but it has to be balanced against setup speed and the need to move between both stations quickly.

Reaching the Original Goal

My original target was 10 activations.

Because I had completed four references the night before, the first morning activation gave me a Warthog. By midday, I had reached the Cheetah-level goal I had originally hoped to complete.

At that point, the day had already been successful.

The remaining parks became the swing for the fences.

We still did not assume that 20 was guaranteed. Propagation could change quickly, and every park introduced another chance for a delay.

The route remained the same. We played the bands by ear.

Six Meters

Six meters was one of the biggest surprises.

The band remained open for much of the day and produced 26 digital contacts. That represented almost one-third of the digital total.

We were also trying to make progress toward the Six Pack award, so we looked for opportunities to use six meters whenever the Squalo would tune.

One of the most memorable moments was a deliberate five-watt test between my Squalo and AC3LX's six-meter vertical.

We each reduced power to five watts and made a contact between the two stations.

I received a report of approximately +34 dB, while he received approximately +4 dB.

It was a close-range contact, but it was still an enjoyable field experiment. It also gave us a chance to compare two different six-meter antennas under real operating conditions.

That contact became one of my favorite moments of the entire trip.

Familiar Callsigns

One of the enjoyable parts of POTA is hearing familiar callsigns.

During the operation, W0KEG, AC1RH, and KJ5GKK, were among the recognizable operators who answered our calls.

Those contacts made the day feel connected to the wider POTA community rather than simply being a race to complete a number.

I also learned from listening to how AC3LX handled voice contacts. His style was more conversational than mine, and I picked up techniques for keeping an exchange moving while still talking naturally to the person on the other end.

That was one of the benefits of operating with someone else. I was not only adding contacts. I was watching another operator's habits and learning from them.

Seven Operators at US-1371

One of the most unusual SSB moments happened while we were activating US-1371.

We encountered a group of seven operators at the same location. Instead of making one contact and moving on, AC3LX worked through the group and passed each operator to me as the second activator.

That gave us seven contacts from one group at one operating location.

The contacts came at an ideal time and quickly increased our safety margin. Encounters like that cannot be planned, but they can make a major difference during a high-speed multi-park operation.

It also demonstrated one of the advantages of AC3LX's conversational operating style. He was able to organize the group, move efficiently from one operator to the next, and include me in each exchange without allowing the process to become confused.

Battery Trouble at US-1371

At US-1371, my radio began disconnecting from the Raspberry Pi.

At first, it appeared to be a computer or radio-control problem. After checking the station more closely, I realized that the 20 Ah battery had dropped too low to power the radio reliably.

I switched the radio to the 100 Ah battery and used that battery for the remainder of the day.

That was an important troubleshooting lesson. A weak battery does not always present itself as a simple radio shutdown. In this case, it appeared as an unreliable connection between the radio and computer.

Once I changed batteries, the station became stable again.



The Seventeenth Activation

By the seventeenth activation, 20 meters had died.

Rather than waiting for the band to recover, I deployed a 40-meter vertical.

The timing worked perfectly. We found an operator who was preparing to go QRT. As soon as he finished, we moved onto the frequency and began calling CQ.

AC1RH found us there and hunted the activation.

That was exactly the kind of fluid operating we had planned for. We did not change the route or abandon the park. We changed antennas, changed bands, and took advantage of an available frequency before the opportunity disappeared.

The Two-Meter Insurance Contact

At one activation, the primary band collapsed while the contact count was still close to the minimum.

We wanted an insurance contact to make sure the activation was secure, so AC3LX and I completed a reciprocal two-meter FM contact.

It was only one contact, but in a challenge where a park could finish with 11 or 12 QSOs, one additional valid contact mattered.

The two-meter exchange was not used to replace normal hunting. It was a practical backup after propagation had failed and we needed to protect the activation from ending with too little margin.

Losing Time to Navigation

The most significant route problem occurred near the eighteenth operating location.

The GPS receiver itself was working. The problem was that the navigation application needed cellular data to load and update the route.

Our phones lost service. The Verizon hotspot normally performed better because it had a stronger antenna, but during this section it also had no usable connection.

Without data, the application could not properly guide us. We went around in a circle, and after service returned, we missed a turn while trying to recover.

The delay cost approximately 30 minutes.

For a future trip, downloading offline maps before departure would prevent the same problem. The hotspot remains useful, but the route should not depend on having a live network connection.

Looking back, parks 17 and 18 could probably have been swapped. That change may have saved approximately 40 minutes.

The overall route worked, but a tighter final section would have given us more breathing room.

The Final Activation

The final activation was at US-1370, Laurel Mountain State Park.

By the time we arrived, AC3LX had already completed his 20 activations. I was still one park short.

That changed my priority. I wanted FT4 running as quickly as possible because I knew it could produce contacts faster than FT8 if the band was open. At a previous activation, FT4 had allowed me to squeeze out the contacts I needed in a limited amount of time.

I began working on the 20-meter digital setup while AC3LX operated SSB on 40 meters.

The irony was that, once again, the activation seemed to go well while I was busy setting up antennas.

Propagation was excellent. Twenty-meter FT4 was open, including paths into Europe, while AC3LX found strong activity on 40-meter SSB.

I focused on digital because I needed the final park. AC3LX already had his 20, but he continued operating and adding contacts.

Once I had 11 solid contacts, I knew I had completed the challenge.

The feeling was relief.

We did not immediately stop because the pileups were still active. The final park eventually produced 24 submitted contacts, evenly divided between SSB and digital.

It became the strongest activation of the day.

Packing Up and Going Home

The final contact occurred around 7:56 p.m. I considered the POTA operation finished around 7:58.

We remained at the site until approximately 8:34 while packing the equipment.

Normal teardown took around five minutes, but this time everything had to be completely packed for the trip home. The mast was the most difficult item to deal with after a full day.

After leaving the site, we stopped at Burger King. It was nearby, still open, and we were hungry.

We spent about an hour eating and talking about the trip, what had worked, and what we could do better.

I left around 9:43 p.m. and drove approximately 68 miles home.

The final drive was easy. It was a familiar route, and I did not feel tired.

I arrived home at approximately 11:17 p.m. and went to bed.

The Results

The operation produced:

- 20 valid POTA park references
 - 17 physical operating locations
 - 274 submitted park records
 - 236 actual on-air contacts after removing multi-fer duplication
 - 81 digital contacts
 - Approximately 154 shared SSB contacts
 - One reciprocal two-meter FM contact
 - No failed activations
 - No empty park logs
 - More than 300 miles of travel
 - Approximately five hours and 12 minutes of logged radio windows
 - A total expedition time of 28 hours and 16 minutes
- The first three-fer and the later two-fer made a major difference.
- Those two operating locations produced five park references from only two physical setups.
- The three-fer probably saved about an hour. The two-fer saved approximately 30 minutes.

What Worked

The biggest success was the division of labor.

AC3LX's vehicle-mounted station allowed him to start SSB almost immediately. My larger antenna and digital station took longer to deploy but gave us more band and mode options.

SSB supplied contacts quickly when conditions were good.

Digital filled gaps when voice activity slowed.

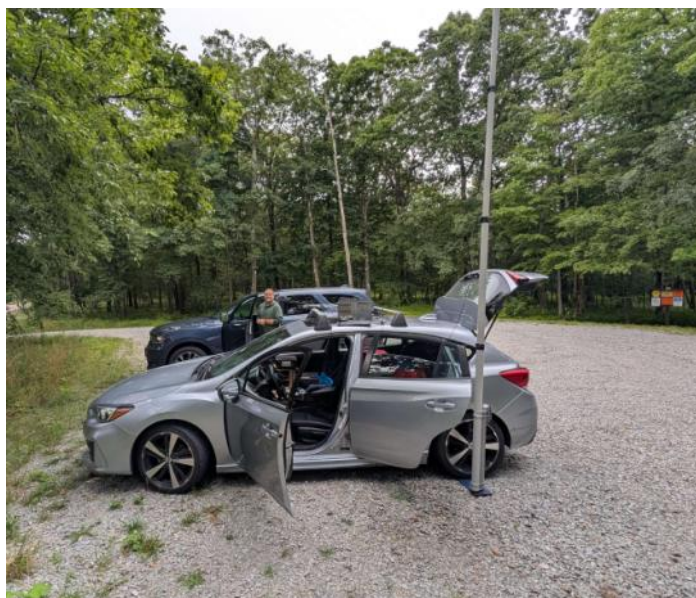
Six meters contributed much more than expected.

The route kept most parks reasonably close together.

The equipment was flexible enough that no single antenna or mode failure stopped the operation.

The spare whip at the first activation was an early example of that flexibility.

The shared antenna approach also mattered. We used whichever antenna gave either operator the best chance of making contacts rather than treating each station as completely separate.



What Needs Improvement

The Raspberry Pi station needs to be easier to deploy.

The Pi itself did everything I needed. It controlled the radio, ran WSJT-X, maintained accurate time, and provided the grid square. The problem was repeatedly unpacking and reconnecting the monitor, keyboard, GPS puck, cables, and power.

I want to turn it into a more self-contained portable station.

I also want to build a roof-rack arrangement for devices that need an unobstructed position. The hotspot and GPS equipment need secure mounting points so they can remain outside without being forgotten. The same system could provide a faster and more organized way to carry and deploy the mast.

The two radios need better isolation. Building band-pass filters may allow SSB and digital to operate simultaneously without one station creating static in the other.

Cable management also needs work. Our minimal tear-downs saved time, but the cables became tangled as the day progressed. A faster reel system for feed lines, power leads, and computer cables would make both deployment and packing easier.

The six-meter tuning system needs to be more reliable.

The route could be tightened, especially near parks 17 and 18.

A departure checklist would reduce the chance of leaving equipment behind. Losing the NanoVNA and twice placing the hotspot on the roof showed how easily small items can disappear during a rushed activation.

Logging also needs a cleaner workflow. AC3LX logged the shared SSB contacts in Polo Logging, and I later took his park-separated files and swapped the callsigns for my copies. My digital contacts came from WSJT-X.

The cleanup took around two hours.

A shared Dropbox folder would make it easier to exchange logs during or immediately after the operation.

I also want to use a GPS logger with a button that can mark events such as:

- Arrival
- Setup
- First contact
- Last contact
- Teardown
- Departure

That would make future after-action analysis much easier.

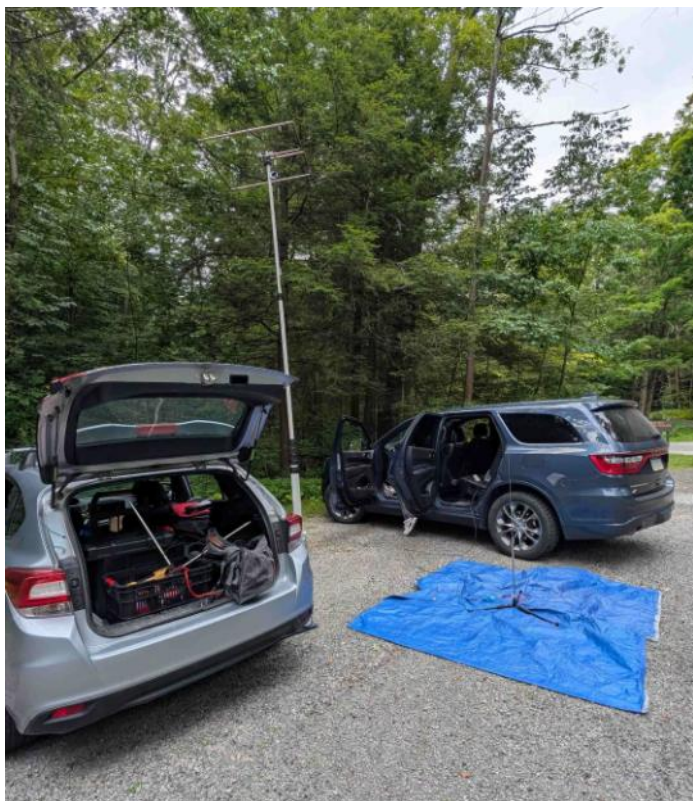
Final Thoughts

This operation began as an attempt to complete a Rhino.

AC3LX suggested 20, and we decided to take the swing.

The number mattered, but it was not the only reason the day was successful. I got to reconnect with someone I had known since college.

We spent the day solving problems, comparing operating styles, testing antennas, working familiar callsigns, and adapting to changing conditions.



The radios worked.

The route worked.

The combination of SSB and digital worked.

Six meters worked much better than expected.

The biggest problems were not failures. They were opportunities to improve the next version of the station and the next version of the plan.

I want to make the Raspberry Pi easier to deploy, improve station isolation, refine the six-meter setup, create better cable reels, secure rooftop equipment, and continue experimenting with portable antennas.

Like my other POTA equipment, the process will evolve through use.

The next attempt will begin with what worked during this one and focus on solving the problems we discovered along the way.

Joel - KC3LVG

Skyview VE Sessions

Skyview provides VE Testing at the Skyview Clubhouse each month (Details provided later, near the end of this newsletter)

Here are the recent success stories

July 2026

KD3DPF - Glenn Perry - Natrona Heights

KD3DNV - Heather Schwartz - Butler

August 2026

KD3DTL - Frank Altieri - New Kensington

September 2026

KD3DPF - Glenn Perry - Natrona Heights

de Bill - N3WMC

Welcome New Members !!

Welcome the following Skyview Radio Society Members who have joined us since publishing the **August 2026** newsletter:

KC3WHX - Paul Barbour - Pittsburgh 15226

WB8YST - Jim Mangus - Charleston, WV

KD8BJW - Susan Johnson - Charleston, WV

KC3DVP - Jeff Zeiss - Cheswick, PA

Remember that something is going on up at 'the joint' every Tuesday. Sign up for the K3MJW Groups.io Reflector to get the latest news and event announcements by email.

If you are a reader who is interested in becoming a Skyview member, then go to:
<http://www.skyviewradio.net/> for information.

If you are a reader who is not yet a ham, and you are interested in becoming a ham, , then go to:
<http://www.skyviewradio.net/> for information.



Skyview Radio Society Roster as of **30 SEP 26**

NM3A	WB3HFP	WC3O	N3VXT
K3AEB	WA3HGW	WO3O	KC3VYK
KD3AET	KB3HPC	KC3OCB	W3VYK
N3AFS	K3HSE	KC3OCC	N3WAV
KD3AMZ	AK4HZ	K3OGN	W3WC
KD3ANT	AG3I	KB3OMB	KC3WCJ
NA0B	AC3IE	KC3OOS	KC3WHX
KD3BEM	KE3IF	K4PDF	N3WKN
KD8BJW	KC3IIO	K2PMD	K3WM
W3BRL	AB3IK	KE3PO	N3WMC
KD3BUF	WB3INB	W3PRL	N3WMI
KD3BXY	W3IU	KC3PSQ	KA3WVU
KD3BYT	KU3J	KC3PXQ	K3WWP
KF3C	WJ3J	AC3Q	N3XF
KA3CBA	K3JAS	NU3Q	KC3YEZ
KC3CBQ	WB3JHC	KC3QAA	N3YJN
W3CDW	N3JLR	NJ3R	KC3YMC
K3CLT	KA3JOU	K3RMB	W3YNI
WB6CQA	ND9JR	N3ROV	KB3YRU
K3DCG	K3JZD	W3RRK	W3YS
N3DL	N3KAC	I2RTF	WB8YST
N3DRB	WA3KFS	K12RTF	KB3YT
KB3DVD	AC0KK	K3RWN	KE3Z
KC3DVP	KC3KXZ	KQ3S	K3ZAU
KC2EGL	WE3L	K3SBE	KB3ZFC
KC3EJC	WA3LCY	WA3SCM	KC3ZOH
KA3EKO	AC3LD	KC3SDJ	W3ZVX
AB3ER	KC3LHW	KC3SNZ	
WA3ERT	K3LL	KB3SOU	
N3ERW	WB5LLI	K3STL	
K3ES	KB3LND	KC3STV	
KG3F	K3LR	N3TIN	
WB3FAE	KC3LRT	W3TLN	
K3FAZ	AB3LS	KK3TM	
KC3FEI	KC3LVG	N3TTE	
K3FKI	KB3LYA	KC3TTK	
KC3FWD	N2MA	AA3TZ	
NG3G	KC3MBM	AG3U	
AC3GB	KC3MIQ	NS3U	
N2GBR	K3MJ	WU3U	
AC3GE	W1MP	KB3UIO	
K3GIR	K3MRN	N3UMV	
KC3GPM	N3MRU	W3UY	
K3GT	KS3N	KX3V	
AB3GY	AC3NA	KC3VCX	
KC3GZW	KB3NSH	KC3VNB	
NY9H	AJ3O	K3VRU	

Notes: Only Call Signs are being published. Refer to QRZ.COM for

Kul - Links

Jody - K3JZD

There is lots of stuff out on the Internet... Some of it can brighten your day. Some of it can educate you.

I can't really copy and past it all in here.
But, I can point you to some of it

Nothing this month

I'll consider any Kul - Links that you find.
Email then to me at: K3JZD AT ARRL DOT NET
They might just end up in the next issue

Previous Issues

Previous Issues of the Q5er are available at
<http://www.nelis.net>

Next Newsletter will be **December 1, 2026**
Closing Date For Submissions : **Nov 15, 2026**
K3JZD AT ARRL DOT NET

Become Well Known Publish in the Q5er

The Q5er goes to other clubs and is
available to all on our web site.

Submissions to : **K3JZD AT ARRL DOT NET**

>>>>> WARNING <<<<<

An Alarm System has been installed up at
the joint. Do Not go in there on your own
until you learn how to disarm and rearm it.

**** Skyview VE Testing ****

For Testing Dates, See :

<http://www.arrl.org/find-an-amateur-radio-license-exam-session>

Time: Usually 8:15 AM

Location: Skyview Clubhouse Meeting Room
2335 Turkey Ridge Rd
New Kensington PA 15068-1936

Contact: Bill Dillen - N3WMC
(724) 882-9612

Email: bdillen@comcast.net
<http://www.skyviewradio.net/ve-tests/>

Please E-Mail or call to register!!!
— NO WALK INS—MUST REGISTER —

Q5er – The Official Newsletter of the Skyview Radio Society



Q5er Editor & Publisher: Jody Nelis - K3JZD

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email your comments and article submissions to:

[K3JZD AT ARRL DOT NET](#)



That's Easy . . .

Come up to the Skyview Clubhouse on any

Tuesday and ask !!!

And See : <https://tinyurl.com/y79tqsr8>

All General Information about the Skyview Radio Society is at <http://www.skyviewradio.net>

Subscribe to K3MJW **groups.io** reflector for All Current News & Activities : <https://groups.io/g/K3MJW>

If you want to keep up with what is going on NOW, that is the place - have it forward Msgs to your email



Is this how your dining room looks ??

[Send in pictures of your Ham Shack](#)